

To: Lewis, Josh[Lewis.Josh@epa.gov]; Kaiser, Sven-Erik[Kaiser.Sven-Erik@epa.gov]; Levine, Carolyn[Levine.Carolyn@epa.gov]; Moody, Christina[Moody.Christina@epa.gov]
From: Howell, Patrick
Sent: Mon 1/26/2015 1:37:29 PM
Subject: Diesel Spill Lewisburg West Virginia - Representative Evan Jenkins

I wanted to see if Representative Evan Jenkins and I could get a briefing on this issue as soon as possible. Details below. Thank you

West Virginia Gazette

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Lewisburg without water after diesel spill

By David Gutman, Staff writer

Lewisburg and surrounding areas are without water and may not have it restored for three days or more after a tanker overturned late Friday night, spilling nearly 4,000 gallons of diesel fuel into a tributary of the Greenbrier River, emergency officials said.

The city shut down its water plant after the tanker overturned on Route 92, spilling fuel into Anthony Creek, which flows into the Greenbrier. Customers of the Lewisburg Water Department were asked to conserve water, but the system ran out around 3 p.m. on Sunday, said Paula Brown, of Greenbrier County Emergency Management.

Brown said they're not sure when water service will be returned but that they've told residents to plan on being without water for at least three days.

"It's going to be quite a challenge we have with the weather coming in here as well," Brown said. "We've got to wait until that contaminant passes from Lewisburg and then it takes a few days to pressurize the water lines there."

The water intake was shut off before any diesel got into the water treatment plant or the water system, said Al Whitaker, director of homeland security and emergency management for Greenbrier County. He said the intake was shut off about 2 a.m. Saturday. He estimated that the diesel did not reach the water intake, until about noon on Saturday, 10 hours after the intake was shut off.

Water is being distributed from tanker trucks at the State Fairgrounds in Fairlea and Island Park in Ronceverte, Brown said. People are being asked to bring their own containers.

The Lewisburg Water Department serves about 12,000 people from Lewisburg north to Renick and south to Ronceverte.

Area restaurants and businesses were ordered shut down by the health department, Brown said, although they may reopen as they develop alternate water plans.

The Greenbrier Valley Medical Center in Ronceverte has brought in its own water tankers to serve the hospital and dialysis patients and remains open, Brown said.

The tanker was hauling 7,000 gallons of diesel north on 92 when it overturned around 11:30 p.m. about 20 miles from the Lewisbug water treatment plant, Whitaker said. He estimated that it spilled between 3,500 and 3,900 gallons of fuel. He said that cleanup crews began work immediately but were slowed by bad roads and ice.

Officials from the federal Environmental Protection Agency are on the scene conducting water tests. Officials from the state Bureau for Public Health, local health departments, the National Guard, other state agencies and two environmental consulting groups are also on the scene, Brown said.

“It’s endless, the number of entities,” she said.

The EPA tests require a 24-hour turnaround, according to a message posted on Lewisburg’s website. Brown said that the National Guard, which can get test results back within 40 minutes, will also be doing testing.

Brown said that diesel has been detected in the river from Anthony to Lewisburg, a distance of about 11 miles, but has not been detected farther south in Alderson.

The nearby Alderson water treatment plant is downstream of the spill, on the Greenbrier, but officials said it has not yet been contaminated.

Protective booms have been set up in the river outside the Alderson plant and testing there has not detected diesel, Brown said. Booms have also been set up around the Lewisburg plant, a message on the city’s website said.

Ronceverte Elementary, Lewisburg Elementary, Frankford Elementary, Eastern Greenbrier Middle School, Greenbrier Episcopal School and Greenbrier East High School are all closed on today because of the water contamination.

The Lewisburg water system pumps about 2 million gallons, Brown said. It has 135 miles of main water line, according to its most recent filing with the state Public Service Commission.

State officials from several agencies remain in contact with local emergency management officials and are assisting as needed, said West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Public Information Officer Toby Wagoner.

Aaron Huffman, co-owner of the General Lewis Inn in Lewisburg, said his inn is officially closed, unable to offer toilet or shower service.

He said that all their weekend guests checked out Sunday. He found a room at a bed and breakfast in White Sulphur Springs for the one guest who was checking in on Sunday.

“We have quite a few people coming this weekend and we have to call them,” he said. “I don’t know exactly what we’re going to do.”

Reach David Gutman

at david.gutman@wvgazette.com, 304-348-5119

- See more at:

<http://www.wvgazette.com/article/20150125/GZ01/150129508#sthash.86p6NRFM.dpuf>

Patrick Howell

Chief of Staff

U.S. Representative Evan Jenkins

502 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

(202) 225-3452